1609

Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

Vol. IX.—No. 23. NEW YORK, N. Y., SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1893. Whole No. 257.

"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."

JOHN HAY.

Problems of Anarchism.

INTRODUCTION.

5.— *Economic Liberty under Modern Conditions.*

Industrial capitalism or the exploitation of labor is not entirely a condition of modern times. It flourished in nearly all the buried civilizations of the past, and was an important factor in their decay. But it differed in one important particular from the capitalism which has succeeded feudal society. It depended mainly upon slaves for productive labor. The free producers had to contend against slave competition, and, as wars of conquest continually augmented their numbers, the slaves finally ousted the free workers, who in the long run became merged into the growing class of serfs, which also assimilated the slaves. And out of serf-laborers again emerged a free working class, but this time without any inferior competing body of toilers.

The laborer under the feudal condition did not compete as a wage-worker against others. His work and subsistence were guaranteed him in return for fixed services, which left him without personal freedom. Industrialism with greater individual liberty began to grow in the cities and towns, to which the serfs gladly fled from the land to sell their labor to the rising class of capitalist employers. Underneath feudalism lay a brutal and selfish individualism of status, which existed only for the benefit of the oligarchy. But capitalism broke up this state by developing a wider, freer individualism, not based on social status, but upon industry and exchange. It offered a greater opportunity to the producer, rendered him more self-reliant and independent, and generally gave him a position superior to his former state. That it offered advantages to the workers can hardly be denied; else it could not have steadily grown by means of voluntary recruiting from the land. Organized production, division of labor, and commercial exchange had reached an advanced stage and was absorbing an increasing proportion of the laboring population when the great industrial revolution, beginning in England in the latter part of the eighteenth century, by the aid of invention, steam power, and machinery transformed capitalism into the greatest of economic forces.

Capitalism in this phase requires large and ever larger accumulations of wealth in the form of exchange values in order to secure its existence. This is the indispensable condition of the capitalist system of production; and, moreover, it is just the point on which it is superior to every preceding economic system. By reason of its enormous accumulation of exchangeable wealth it renders life and labor more secure for the whole of society. Because wealth employed as a source of income can only accomplish its purpose in proportion as it is used productively and creates a demand for human activity. It augments the means of subsistence. We are here comparing the results of capitalism with previous economic states, not with any ideal; merely noting facts, not constructing theories.

Though it may be true that in an earlier period it was possible for the individual man to procure the prime necessities by direct labor, as the savage today is in this respect less dependent than the civilized man, yet it is equally certain that his means of life on the average were more precarious. His wants were fewer than those of a man of today, for our needs grow at a much faster rate than our means of satisfying them, and modern conditions are continually creating new wants which were undreamt of by our ancestors. But even those fewer wants were supplied in pre-capitalistic times with more trouble and risk than the wage slave of capitalism usually undergoes to supply his much greater needs. Besides, in former times the economic life of the whole population was more uncertain and insecure than capitalism has now rendered the average lot of the masses. There is less danger of death by famine through any cause whatever, though wars, pestilences, etc., still act and react injuriously upon the industrial classes, but in a much less degree than ever before.

Capitalistic society has its source in individualism, but, as already explained, when this principle has a wider scope, it necessarily results in an enlargement of what I might here call economic altruism. For capitalistic production as an essential condition to individual success has led men to study the needs of others, literally to provide for them: they are impelled to act in such a way that the general result is an increase of human happiness. Witness the ordinary economic effects. Increasing capital, improved methods, larger and larger production, reduced cost, cheaper and more abundant commodities allow every body to satisfy his wants with less exertion.

The unconscious coöperation which capitalism has certainly brought about is more widespread and has resulted in greater benefits to all than could ever have been conceived by any consciously-regulated system based on theoretic coöperation. Yet capitalist coöperation is the direct outcome of individualism. Its results are none the less beneficent and valuable.

Though the usual method of attacking existing economic arrangements is vague and unsatisfactory, it is surely not unreasonable to look for some alternative system, some more fitting economic principle, from those who undertake any serious criticism. Nor should we be disappointed. The question arises as to what constitutes the essence of the proposed methods.

I believe it is a truthful description to say that consciously combined economic effort—combined not purely for individual benefit but for the collective interest—is the essence of all systematic alternatives to capitalism. Coöperation, in voluntary groups or in organized communities, under free conditions or State authority, associated control of exchange values either by separate classes of producers or by the nation, one or other of these forms of coöperation is held forth by the economic regenerators as superior to the present industrial order and hence more desirable.

Now, it is historically true that not merely were such methods unsuited to the conditions, economic, social, and moral, under which capitalism developed, but, even if they had been possible, they could never have accomplished the incalculable work for the advancement of the human race which the capitalist system has already achieved. We have not the least reason to believe that the working classes could have organized their own labor for their mutual benefit, even had they been allowed control of the means of production,—represented then by land and other natural media,—or that any form of coöperative industry of the Utopian order could have successfully survived amid the times and conditions in which originated and grew the industrial system of capitalism.

Nay, in view of the facts, it is beyond all question that, had mankind to wait until conscious and ideal economic coöperation was capable of assuming the functions which capitalism became fitted for and has so substantially performed, we should still be very far behind the stage of progress already reached. Observe the gigantic failures of all efforts in this direction hitherto attempted,—their inadequacy compared with the individualistic industrial performances, whose unconscious efforts lead none the less to the results to which those less successfully aspire. For when they seem to show any success,—which however never equals the best otherwise attained,—it is only when they become in method and in fact capitalistic. I may have occasion later to discuss this question, than which none in economics is more befogged in blind faith, prejudice, and sentimentalism. At present I shall only add, to make clear the above and bring out my meaning, the instance of the economics of the famous institution known as the Village Community.

This system of agrarian industrialism based at once on ownership of the means of production, the land, by the producers and on conscious coöperation as the method of using it, was, and is, marked by the absence of all progress, and by a stereotyped conservatism, which in its non-progressive results conclusively proves its inferiority to capitalism. The Russian *mir* is one of the best surviving instances.

The enormous extent of unconscious and indirect cooperation which the present system on purely individualist lines has developed in an all-embracing net-work around the earth is generally overlooked by its opponents.

We see the people of Yorkshire and Lancashire in England working on fabrics to cover the black skins of the inhabitants of tropical Africa and to clothe the sheep-raisers of New Zealand, and in return being fed by the wheat, beef, and pork produced on great capitalist farms on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains or the valleys of the Mississippi. While, be it remembered, the English workers are better off in consequence of this capitalistic coöperation than if they followed primitive methods and raised their subsistence themselves from the soil on which they live: and the other participants benefit in like manner by the arrangement.

What is true of this instance is equally true all round.

In fact, the hopes raised by modern economic ideals are wholly the outcome of the observed achievements of capitalistic methods of industry. The writings of social reformers, Communists, etc., furnish ample proof, notwithstanding the Platonic and Utopian social ideals of former ages.

As before observed, the modern economic system requires vast accumulations of exchange values; and, at least in the earlier stages of machine industry, their concentration was also indispensable. To meet the unprecedented expansion consequent on the industrial revolution a rapid development and storing-up of capital for productive purposes could not be avoided.

Under the individualist system, not yet having attained the period of good results, the working classes were obliged to bear this strain. They were overworked and underpaid. This is a positive and deliberate statement of fact. It was not that they were relatively ill-paid and hard-worked; they received a much smaller proportion of the results of their labor, of the total product, than at any past time or probably any time since. The only mitigating circumstance being that the people thus made to suffer were a new industrial class mostly taken from agriculture and were probably in quite as bad a plight (if not worse) in the conditions they left as they found themselves in under the new machine system of industry. But these and

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Liberty.

Issued Weekly at Two Dollars a Year; Single Copies, Four Cents.

BENJ. R. TUCKER, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

Office of Publication, 120 Liberty Street.
Post Office Address: LIBERTY, P. O. Box No. 1312, New-York, N. Y.

Entered at New York as Second-Class Mail Matter.

NEW YORK, N. Y., FEBRUARY 4, 1893.

"In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel."—PROUDHON.

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Anarchism Exemplified.

From time to time (from sources both worthy and unworthy of notice) there are to be heard complaints that Anarchism offers nothing in the place of the old and evil ideas which it would efface,—in the place of the tyrannical institutions which it would abolish; in other words, that it is destructive, but not constructive; that, until it offers to mankind a concrete something better than that with which they have struggled and existed for so long, it is not worthy the notice of *practical* people. To those who are gifted with an amount of reasoning power commensurate with their interest in the speedy solution of serious problems in sociology and economics, it is wholly unnecessary to make any explanation whatever of the objects which Anarchism would accomplish and of the ends which, by and through the means of liberty, it would attain. It would be superfluous and perhaps impertinent, therefore, to presume to point out to such persons those conclusions which they are fully able to deduce from the Anarchistic premises. And it is a debatable question whether or not it is the part of wisdom to attempt to reason with or instruct those who are not endowed with the proper mental qualifications. But, at the risk of being both unwise and impertinent, I wish to call the attention of the readers of Liberty to an object-lesson, although it may be one with which some of them are already acquainted.

A few miles off the coast of Virginia lies the island of Chincoteague. And such is the simplicity of the social relations of its inhabitants that it might be cited as almost a type of Anarchist society. The population consists of a sturdy race of oystermen who have so much common sense and such an appreciation of the advantages of freedom that, according to the traditions of the island, it has never, although a part of the State of Virginia, had a slave upon it. The spirit of the people is seen in their attitude toward slavery; "and," says the correspondent of the Philadelphia "Times," "in the energy with which prosperity and order have been conquered from squalor and a rude civilization." I am sure that more about these model people would be interesting to Liberty's readers, so let me quote the "Times" correspondent at greater length:

With an area of less than 10,000 acres, of which not more than one-fifth is under cultivation, Chincoteague maintains in comfort a population of at least 2000. The greater part of these people live in an unincorporated village, with no police officers save the county constables and justices; yet crime is rare, theft is unknown, and disorder is unusual. There is little or no drunkenness on the island. Nobody begs, and every able-bodied man is sure of profitable employment for nine months in the year. The wealthiest man on the island, estimated by his neighbors to be worth from $60,000 to $100,000, was not many years ago a working oysterman, and the poorest man on the island does not need for food or shelter.

The people of Chincoteague live upon the bounty of the broad Atlantic. Whatever good things come out of the salt water are theirs. . . .

By a simple provision of the Virginia oyster laws every able-bodied man on Chincoteague is assured constant employment at fair wages so long as the natural oyster beds hold out. The law provides that no private individual shall enjoy the exclusive privilege of fishing on any natural oyster bed, and that any person twelve months a resident of the State may fish on such beds during nine months of the year. It is true that no man gets more than a comfortable living in fishing upon the natural beds, and that several men have got rich, according to Chincoteague's standards of wealth, by planting oysters in private beds, of which they have exclusive use; but private beds must be worked by hired oystermen, and so long as any man may go and fish on his own account upon the natural beds, the owners of private beds must pay to oystermen at least as much as a self-employing man can earn. There is no envy of the men who have staked off the gray-green waters of the Sound in private oyster beds, but the mass of Chincoteaguers cherish their rights in the natural beds, and jealously guard against any attempt to make them the exclusive property of individuals.

Here, clearly without knowing it, the "Times" has given to its readers the key to the industrial and social situation; for, while the "Times" is perhaps one of the best newspapers—as monopolistic newspapers go—in Philadelphia, it is quite reasonable to believe that it would not intentionally acquaint its constituency with anything so anti-monopolistic as its correspondent's account of the customs and habits of the people of the island of Chincoteague.

Barring the unjust legal provision that the qualification for a fisherman is "twelve months a resident of the State," and the fact that the State has laws to guarantee to the oystermen the rights which would be theirs in the absence of other laws protecting a holder of land in the retention of that which he does not occupy and use, the residents of Chincoteague have a state of society, and industrial and economic relations in general, which might well be envied by us less fortunate mortals, who are obliged to live in a society a vast majority of whose members have no knowledge of freedom, and consequently no desire for it.

There is one point in the extract which I have made from the "Times" to which I wish to call especial attention, as it is a demonstration of one of the fundamental and essential principles of Anarchism. It is this. Just as the owner of a private oyster bed is forced to pay to his employees at least as much as the latter can earn by working for themselves, so when men have free access to *all* natural opportunities, wages will, through the unimpeded operation of the law of supply and demand, rise to a point where labor will be fully remunerated and the vast accumulation of wealth by the employer rendered impossible. Under such freedom monopoly could not exist.

Of course it would be preposterous to assert that these people understand Anarchism. My only claim in that direction is that the natural tendencies of civilized people who are not under the immediate domination of politicians are towards minding their own business and permitting others to do the same. The simplicity of their social and economic relations, it is true, has much to do with making such a life possible. Compared with the complexity of affairs in any of the large cities of the world, Chincoteague is a very small factor in the solution of the pressing problem; but it is nevertheless a factor, and as such it may be used as a foundation upon which may be erected a complete structure; yet to build upon it alone would be the most palpable empiricism. However, science can show that Chincoteague is many strides in advance of the centres of civilization and population on the road toward freedom, and the circumstance is a demonstration of the theory and principle of equal liberty.

If the State is so little used and so nearly useless where the people are to a great extent uneducated, both in the scholastic and in the sociologic sense, why should it not be much less a matter of necessity in the more enlightened portions of the country? Certainly the silly and absurd charge that Anarchism is possible only when mankind have become "perfect" needs no other refutation. Unless education and enlightenment are to be detriments, hindrances to our progress, unless retrogression is to be the sequence of study and investigation, the lesson that Chincoteague teaches is that Anarchism is not only practicable, but is the next step in the progress of civilization and the evolution of society.

C. L. S.

Boston is drenched in her own tears over the death of Phillips Brooks. Doubtless my adverse judgment of this man's character is considerably intensified by the personal grievance that I had against him in consequence of a petty outrage that I once suffered at his hands, and I see no reason to expect that the popular verdict concerning him will ever be reversed. Still, few things are more certain to me than that Phillips Brooks was precisely the opposite of what he was generally taken to be,—that is, not refined, but coarse; not broad, but bigoted; not gentle, but overbearing; not honest, but hypocritical.

In his "Quintessence of Ibsenism" Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, who is both a State Socialist and an admirer of Ibsen, is at some pains to distinguish between Ibsen's political attitude and Anarchism. I beg his attention to the specific declaration made by Ibsen in a recent interview, printed in another column, that he is an Anarchist and an Individualist, and not a Socialist or a Collectivist.

Problems of Anarchism.

(Continued from page 1.)

many other evils were the necessary products of a transitory stage, a sudden and unprecedented revolution, and formed no essential part of the new system. The cause of the evils brought the remedy. Capital increased with still greater rapidity, and in this continuous accumulation of exchange values beyond the first imperative needs lay the antidote to the abuses.

This review has prepared us to find out, with a better chance of succeeding, how individual liberty has fared during the economic change. It would here prove instructive if we were to trace the results in the political history of the period. We should see that the political aspect of liberty has its root in economic conditions and changes, that the former is the result of the latter, and that a progressive movement towards political liberty is conclusive proof of an economic advancement. This subject must, however, be passed over; it is not indispensable to our inquiry. The result of the foregoing review, I hope, will show that capitalism takes a necessary place in economic evolution; that alternative schemes are barren of all results that have any bearing upon the point at issue; and that individual freedom cannot be found to have lost ground in the conflict. The social and sentimental side of economic development I have purposely left out. Because an enumeration and discussion of the evils of capitalism would not further us in the object now in view. We shall endeavor to find their causes in due course, and attempt to answer the questions, whether such evils are part of the nature of things, whether they form the unavoidable consequences of economic progress and a greater liberty, and whether we can safely look to further economic change in the same line of development to solve the social problem.

WM. BAILIE.

Henrik Ibsen.

[Maurice Bigeon in Le Figaro.]

One should never penetrate the privacy of great men. The halo with which it pleases us to surround their forehead, and which shines so magnificently in the broad sunlight of glory, seen more closely is but a crown of gilded paper.

I had met Ibsen on the Karl-Johansgade, the boulevard of Christiana, coming at his usual hour and with his tranquil saunter to dine at the Grand Hotel. A few minutes later he was pointed out to me sitting at a table, in the shadow, taciturn and solitary, according to his wont. And yet I felt almost a disappointment when, in a substantial reception-room, symmetrically filled with well-brushed furniture and ornamented with a few pictures, I was introduced to a little old man, coquettish, spruce, discreet, with little gestures and obliging manners, and hidden in a comfortable frock-coat. This little old man the great and vigorous genius who creates so many souls and causes so much talk about the passions!

The nose is strong, the cheek-bones red and prominent, the chin strongly pronounced. His large gold-bowed spectacles, his thick white beard in which the lower part of the face is buried, give him the appearance of a provincial magistrate who has grown old upon the bench. All the poetry of the soul, all the splendor of the intelligence, have taken refuge apparently in the delicate, long, and somewhat sensual lips, curling at the corners with an expression of proud irony; in the look, now gentle and melancholy, now active and aggressive, the look of a mystic and a struggler,—a look as disturbing, agitating, and tormented as the Norwegian soul itself. But above all the brow is magnificent, square, solid, of powerful contour, the heroic brow of a genius, vast as the world of thoughts which it shelters. And dominating the whole, still further emphasizing this impression of ideal animality conveyed by his physiognomy, a white, impetuous, insubordinate mane.

Ibsen does not speak or understand French. Therefore during my hour's conversation with him the services of an interpreter were necessary. First I presented him the respectful homage of intellectual France which he has so profoundly stirred and of which he is becoming one of the most heeded masters. He seemed much flattered, thanked me, and then said:

"And yet, Monsieur, the French know me far from well, for all the French translations of my works save one—that of M. Prozor, the only one, by the way, authorized by me—are unfaithful and often very queer."

"And the stage representations?"

"Oh! that's another matter! I have not, it is true, entered into direct relations with any of the Parisian managers, no more with M. Antoine than with M. Carré; Count Prozor, who is very familiar with Parisian life, has attended to everything. But the Paris correspondents of the principal Scandinavian journals have given very full details concerning the mounting and the acting, the conception and the interpretation of the text; you can imagine, Monsieur, how these accounts have interested me; I feared that I should be misunderstood, that the actors would not have sufficiently exact ideas of Norwegian life, the Norwegian mind, and the character of my heroines; I have been satisfied beyond my desires, I did not dare hope for so much."

"Do you think, master, that the criticisms have been equal to the interpretation?"

"Better yet, if possible. I repeat, not knowing your language, I am incapable of judging at first-hand the works of those who write it; but I am kept informed by the detailed analyses, the almost complete reports of the opinions of your press given in the journals of my own country, and I am surprised, greatly surprised at the extraordinary intelligence of your dramatic critics. M. Erhardt has produced a book which certainly will not be soon surpassed, and so much as I have been able to taste of M. Jules Lemaître's lecture on 'Hedda Gabler' seems to me a marvel. I have a great liking, by the way, for the talent of M. Jules Lemaître. He is the most agreeable, the most—the most coquettish of all journalists, and the clearness of his mind is paralleled only by the elegant grace of his style. Better than all your other critics together has M. Lemaître seen, understood, and clearly stated that Hedda Gabler is what I intended her to be, a sick person, a 'woman of nerves,' whose body dominates her soul and who is consumed by ardent passions. The French have really much intelligence, and I am delighted that in so short a time, after so rapid an education, they have cordially extended to the poor children of my mind the freedom of their city."

I bowed, he bowed, and I asked him:

"And the young dramatic school, the school of new authors, who claim you as master and who preach your philosophy, has it your approval? Do you recognize these authors as your intellectual sons?"

"Yes," he answered with vivacity, "and it is one of my sources of pride in my old age. I am prouder than of many other successes to have been chosen as a fount of inspiration by these Frenchmen, whose *rôle* has always been to preach the gospel. Yes, these young people are my children, they pursue the same object, they are freeing the individual and giving health to society. They are beginning only, but they will go faster and farther than I; they will see what I will not have seen. They will take the lead in this movement for human renovation which I dreamed of carrying to its end, but which is beyond the strength of a single man. Let them beware, however, of haste; and especially let them be distrustful of pride. However powerful, however formidable they may be, dramas, novels, books are none of them worth so much for the triumph of the good cause as the voluntary and deliberate act of a man, a man of heart fortified in his liberty. It is not dreams and verses and phrases that are necessary to the great human cause, but acts!"

"Do you consider M. Zola your collaborator, master, in the philosophical work of liberation which you have assigned yourself?"

He hesitated a few moments and then answered:

"M. Zola? Yes and no. Yes, he has been my collaborator, because he has shaken society with a vigorous hand; because, to more swiftly destroy it, he has described its weaknesses, has photographed all its cracks, and thus shown with admirable eloquence and logic the necessity of ruining the old edifice in order to build a purer temple. No, because at the bottom we do not follow the same path and have not the same end in view. He is a Socialist and Collectivist. *I am an Anarchist and Individualist.* The difference is radical; it results from diametrically opposite philosophies. However, in spite of this divergence in systems, I have for this author the admiration which he merits. He is a great worker of the future."

"Has any French play seemed to you to be inspired by the spirit that inspires you?"

"Yes, a drama, 'Les Corbeaux,' by M.—by M.—what is his name?"

"M. Becque."

"M. Becque, M. Henri Becque, precisely! I am even astonished that so strong a work should have produced so slight an impression, should not have revealed to the French public the necessities of the theatre; that such a master should not have grouped about him a band of young and audacious talents. I have given much thought too, and with a special interest, to the theories of M. Dumas on marriage, the relations of husbands and wives, and the necessary virginity of the young. Unfortunately these beautiful doctrines will never be applied, however seductive they may seem to us, however desirable their triumph. It would be necessary to change social traditions, to reform human nature in fact."

"And our symbolists?"

"Oh! they, even more than your young realistic dramatists, are my favorites. Unfortunately I know them but little: they are very young and I am very old, but I love them, for they have the 'thrill of the future, they will sing the hymn to the dawn,' they will fill the days that are to come. Between them and me there is a communion of ideas. I have just finished a piece in five acts, a symbolist piece, which is now in press."

"What is its title?"

"It takes its title from the name of the principal character; but I cannot give you the name. It will be known in a fortnight, or a month at most; but for the present my contract with my publisher binds me to the most absolute secrecy. Moreover, I do not care to say anything in advance of public judgment; I am afraid that a word from me, ill said or misinterpreted, might lay a foundation for false or conventional interpretations of the work itself. I do not wish to influence any one: for the same reason that I respect personality in action, I do not wish to invade individuality in criticism. Let each then think as he will: I shall have done my work."

"Do you look upon M. Zola's symbolism, of which so much is said, as real, and does it resemble yours?"

"It has a real existence; M. Zola is perhaps the first, the oldest of the symbolists among contemporary men of letters; only he and I do not present the infinite in the same fashion. 'Germinal' and 'La Terre' are two admirable symbols, of 'vertiginous depth,' perhaps the most eloquent that I know in all human works; never has M. Zola done better, and since their appearance I have much respected him. But M. Zola's symbols are a result of the general action, a conclusion of the drama; mine are beginnings, promises, the very *raison d'être* of things; they contain the reality, whereas M. Zola's are explained by the reality."

"Shall I be indiscreet, master, if I ask you whether any French authors have had influence on the development of your mind?"

"I read little, but I do not read French authors at all, since I do not know their language. And the translations! Therefore I may say that none of your authors have formed me. I have studied dramatic technique in our great dramatists, who, more than any others, have perfected it and given it flexibility; better than any others do they know how to observe theatrical logic, propound problems, and solve them. But no one was master of my thought, of my philosophy, of my ideas, and of my opinions. I have sought everything within myself, all has come from my own heart. It is because I have had a very strong, very vigorous, very commanding impression of life and human society that I have written what I have written."

"To use your great word, it was your *vocation?*"

"It was my vocation!"

All this was said in a sinuous and agreeable little voice, with caressing and pretty inflections, which lingered on the strong Norwegian syllables, embellished phrases, and was seldom raised. As I was about to start, he detained me with a discreet gesture, and said, after a moment of embarrassed hesitation:

"I am very glad to see, at the end of my life, my works so cordially welcomed by the French. Thanks to their hospitality, my books have become a part of the patrimony of the race. The French are men of great heart and great enthusiasm, they have the honesty of intelligence. And it is in your city, Monsieur, in that Paris in which you soon will be, where I shall go perhaps before I die, that the heart of the world really beats!"

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*260. Ibsen's New Drama, "The Master Builder." In German. By F. Mauthner. Magazin für Litteratur, Dec. 17.

§ 269. Traces of de Maupassant in German Verse. In German. By S. Mehring. Nord und Süd, Dec.

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